



NEWS RELEASE

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ORGANIZED RETAIL THEFT RING INVESTIGATION AND ARRESTS

Earlier in 2012, the Arizona Organized Retail Crime Association (AZ ORCA) advised personnel from the Tucson Police Department that a group of female thieves seemed to be targeting CVS stores in the Greater Tucson Metro Area in order to shoplift large amounts of merchandise from the stores. In August of 2012, investigative personnel assigned to the Major Theft Offenders Unit (MTOU) of the Tucson Police Department met with CVS Loss Prevention Representatives in order to initiate a more thorough investigation into the thefts. At that time, it was believed that a group of four females was involved in six to eight separate shoplifting incidents that occurred at CVS stores in and around the City of Tucson. Generic information was provided to the investigators, including basic descriptions of the females as well as information regarding a vehicle that they were seen leaving in from some of the incident locations.

In conducting further examination into the available information and checking with other retail establishments in the area, the investigators later learned that the females were part of an organized retail theft ring, which was responsible for an **estimated 20 to 30 separate large-scale shoplifting incidents** at various retail establishments. In addition to CVS stores, other victim businesses included Safeway, Walgreens, Ross, and Charming Charlies stores. The investigators discovered that the females would steal a large amount of merchandise, primarily cosmetics, jewelry, accessories, and clothing, from the various stores. After successfully shoplifting the items, the group would transfer the property to other persons, who would then sell it at the Tanque Verde Swap Meet.

In late November 2012, the MTOU investigators applied for and obtained a warrant to search a residence associated to the suspects as well as to search a stall/store at the Tanque Verde Swap Meet. The investigators recovered a **significant amount of merchandise**, having an **estimated value of over \$100,000.00**. Ultimately, as a result of their investigation, the MTOU personnel **arrested four adult females and obtained an arrest warrant for another adult female** for their involvement in the incidents and subsequent storing and selling of the stolen property. The four adult females who were arrested thus far and their charges, include:

- **Jessica Rodriguez (25 years old) – 1 count of Illegally Conducting an Enterprise, 1 count of Money Laundering, 1 count of Theft, and 1 count of Trafficking in Stolen Property, all felony offenses.**
- **Melesia Romo (31 years old) – 1 count of Illegally Conducting an Enterprise, 1 count of Money Laundering, and 1 count of Theft, all felony offenses**

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- **Veronica Munoz (33 years old) - 1 count of Illegally Conducting an Enterprise, 1 count of Money Laundering, 1 count of Theft, and 1 count of Organized Retail Theft, all felony offenses**
- **Karla Castro (20 years old) - 1 count of Illegally Conducting an Enterprise, 1 count of Money Laundering, 1 count of Theft, and 1 count of Organized Retail Theft, all felony offenses**

A warrant for the arrest of **Karina Ortiz (27 years old)** was obtained by investigators, charging her with **1 count of Illegally Conducting an Enterprise, 1 count of Money Laundering, 1 count of Theft and 6 counts of Organized Retail Theft, all felony offenses.**

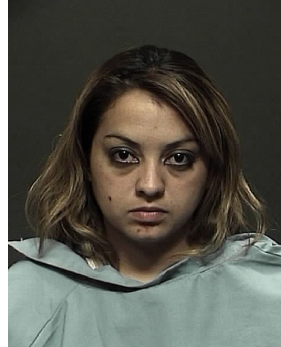
Photographs of the arrested females are included below. An arrest/booking photograph for Karina Ortiz is not yet available, as she has not yet been located and arrested for her involvement in these incidents.



Jessica Rodriguez



Karla Castro



Melesia Romo



Veronica Munoz

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